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SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: DRAFT 2009 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL
STRATEGY REPORT PART I, DRUGS AND CHEMICAL CONTROL

REF: 09 STATE 97309

1. (U) SUMMARY: Uzbekistan is a geographically strategic crossroads between South Asia and Europe. It is primarily a transit country for opiates originating in Afghanistan, with an estimated 95 tons of Afghan opiates passing through Central Asia each year. Well-established trade routes facilitate the transit of these narcotics to Russia and Europe. Although the vast majority of these drugs will never reach U.S. soil, local drug trafficking ultimately affects the security of the United States by threatening the security of U.S. friends and allies. Throughout Central Asia, there are strong connections between narco-trafficking and terrorism. Extremist groups often use the profits of the drug trade to undermine, destabilize, and corrupt government institutions. The Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) has taken some independent steps to combat the narcotics trade but still relies heavily on multilateral and bilateral financial and technical resources. Uzbekistan is slowly reengaging the international community, including the United States Government (USG), after a period of comparative isolation. In a major step towards more effective bilateral cooperation, the GOU accredited a "Counternarcotics Affairs Office" (CAO) staffed by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). However, greater efforts are needed to stem the flow of narcotics through Uzbek territory. Law enforcement officers seized approximately 1,820 kilograms of illegal narcotics in the first six months of 2009, with opiates accounting for almost 84 percent of seizures. Uzbekistan is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention. END SUMMARY.

STATUS OF COUNTRY

2. (U) As with many countries, illegal narcotics create serious social, health, and law enforcement problems in Uzbekistan. Dealing with these problems requires consistent and sustained efforts by the GOU and its international partners; the development of an integrated and comprehensive counternarcotics strategy will facilitate these efforts. On the positive side, counternarcotics issues have been attracting the attention of some high-level Uzbek officials, along with increasing press coverage. However, although there is political will to deal with local drug problems, implementation of programs is slow and bureaucratic. Although Uzbek law enforcement officers seem eager to work with their international counterparts, they are not free to act without heavy political oversight. The GOU is showing signs of greater openness to bilateral and multilateral cooperation. However, without direct and regular access to Uzbek law enforcement components by Uzbekistan's international partners, efforts to develop a counternarcotics strategy will suffer, and pursuit of joint investigations will be difficult at best. The newly reopened Counternarcotics Affairs Office seeks broad-based cooperation with all Uzbek law enforcement agencies, with a special focus on building Uzbek capacity to investigate and prosecute drug crimes.

13. (U) While there is no significant drug production in Uzbekistan, several transshipment routes for opium, heroin, and hashish originate in Afghanistan and cross Uzbekistan for destinations in Russia and Europe. Seizures for the first half of 2009 increased by approximately seven percent compared to the same time period in 2008, according to official statistics. (Seizures in 2008 had increased by 54 percent in comparison with 2007.) Precursor chemicals have, in the past, traveled the same transshipment routes in reverse on their way to laboratories in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

COUNTRY ACTIONS AGAINST DRUGS IN 2009

POLICY INITIATIVES

14. (U) The accreditation of the Counternarcotics Affairs Office is just one signal of Uzbekistan's increasing willingness to cooperate with international partners in its efforts to combat illegal narcotics. In 2009, Uzbekistan took important steps

towards improving its counternarcotics capacity and law enforcement institutions by participating in international programs and taking advantage of training opportunities. Uzbek Customs officials developed a local canine (K-9) training center with assistance from the State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). In March 2009, Uzbek Customs officers participated in an INL-sponsored K-9 conference in Kazakhstan. Such training offers long-term benefits not only to Uzbekistan, but to the entire region-Uzbek officials have already begun to share their expertise with customs officials of neighboring countries. The Government of Uzbekistan also cooperates with neighboring countries through its participation in the Central Asia Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC), and the Border Management Assistance Program-Central Asia Border Security Initiative (BOMCA-CABSI) sponsored by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). An Uzbek representative attended the regional 2009 International Drug Enforcement Conference (IDEC) at the invitation of the USG, and GOU officials have been invited to attend the 2010 IDEC in Brazil. Uzbekistan participated in the regional training event Operation TARCET II, which was sponsored by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and designed to focus regional and international manpower, intelligence, and operational resources on identifying and intercepting precursor chemicals bounds for Afghanistan. The UNODC continues to implement projects focusing on improvements in law enforcement, precursor chemical control, border security, and drug demand reduction. UNODC has reported that cooperation with Uzbek law enforcement agencies is steadily improving.

15. (U) Uzbekistan continues to work toward the goals of the 1988 UN Drug Convention on combating illicit cultivation and production. The annual "Black Poppy" eradication campaign has virtually eliminated illicit poppy cultivation within the borders of Uzbekistan. In addition, the GOU has created counternarcotics task forces at airports and border checkpoints. However, efforts to achieve convention goals are still hampered by the lack of effective laws, programs, money, appropriate international agreements, and coordination among law enforcement agencies. The GOU focuses its law enforcement efforts almost exclusively on drug seizures and arrests of minor drug traffickers. The CAO hopes to work with the GOU to expand its capacity for conducting investigations and prosecuting crimes, providing comprehensive mentor support, training, and enhanced investigation intelligence.

LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS

¶6. (U) Preliminary statistics provided by the GOU show that in the first half of 2009, Uzbek law enforcement seized a total of 1,820 kilograms of illicit drugs, a seven percent increase from the same period last year. Opium poppy straw accounted for 35 percent of the total, heroin for 28 percent, opium for 20 percent, cannabis for 15 percent, and hashish for about one percent. For the first six months of 2008 authorities reported 5,737 narcotics-related criminal cases, including 176 arrests for drug smuggling and 3,219 for drug distribution. During the first six months of 2009, Uzbekistan reported 4,712 criminal cases pertaining to narcotics, including 174 arrests for drug smuggling and 2,350 for drug distribution. Although the number of criminal cases for the first half of 2009 represents an eighteen percent decrease compared with the same period in 2008, this apparently negative indicator may mean that these statistics have not been manipulated-which would actually be a positive sign.

¶7. (U) Four agencies with separate jurisdictions have counternarcotics responsibilities: the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), the National Security Service (NSS), the State Customs Committee and the Office of the Prosecutor General. (The Ministry of Defense also plays a role in general border security.) The MVD concentrates on domestic crime, the NSS (which includes the Border Guards) handles international organized crime (in addition to its intelligence role), and Customs works at the border (interdiction/seizures at the border are also carried out by the Border Guards during their normal course of duties). The CAO intends to conduct broad-based cooperation with all of these law enforcement agencies. Despite the delineation of responsibilities, a lack of intelligence sharing and operational coordination diminishes the effectiveness of counternarcotics efforts. The National Center for Drug Control was designed to minimize mistrust, rivalry and duplication of effort among the agencies, but the Center continues to have difficulty accomplishing this goal. Its

role is purely administrative; it synchronizes the statistics of the various agencies, but has no control over budget or policy decisions. However, the National Center for Drug Control readily shares data with the U.S. Government and other international entities. The NSS plays a pivotal role in the operations of all GOU agencies.

¶8. (U) According to National Center reports, most smuggling incidents involve one to two individuals. Large, sophisticated "priority targets" are few, but there are many small, independent smuggling organizations operating between Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Poor border controls allow drug traffickers to cross between the countries with relative ease. Resource and legal constraints have limited the GOU's ability to investigate these cases, and lack of training and equipment continues to hamper all Uzbek agencies. Basic necessities, even replacements for aging Soviet era equipment, remain in short supply or seem administratively difficult to obtain. Uzbekistan has relied heavily on international assistance from UNODC, the U.S., the UK, the EU, and others to supplement its own thinly-funded programs.

CORRUPTION

¶9. (U) As a matter of policy the GOU does not encourage or facilitate illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances. However, corruption is endemic at all levels of government, and the paying

of bribes is an accepted practice. Drug profits contribute to corruption throughout Central Asia. One of the principal obstacles to a sustained counternarcotics strategy is the intervention of corrupt officials. Salaries of law enforcement officers are generally very low, and there are anecdotal accounts of customs and border officials supplementing their incomes by accepting bribes to ignore narcotics shipments. It is likely that some government officials are involved with narcotics trafficking organizations. Conspiracy laws in Uzbekistan are ineffective, and corruption cases usually target low or mid-level officers. However, the GOU is implementing anti-corruption programs with the assistance of the international community. In one example, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) recently introduced an automated phone system which allows callers to officially report crimes; the recorded information that callers provide cannot be deleted by law enforcement officers or any other internal employees. With this program, the MVD aims to reduce corruption by making it more difficult for GOU employees to conceal crimes.

¶10. (U) The Uzbek criminal justice system continues to suffer from a lack of modernization and reform, mainly judicial and procedural reform, and standards remain below international norms. The Uzbek criminal justice system is largely inherited from the Soviet Union. The Executive Branch and Prosecutor General's Office are powerful entities, and the judiciary is not independent. The outcomes of court cases are usually predetermined, and conviction rates approach 100 percent. Prosecutions often rely on coerced confessions by the defendants, and conviction is typical even in the absence of evidence. Corruption at all levels of the criminal justice system is rampant.

AGREEMENTS AND TREATIES

¶11. (U) Uzbekistan is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1961 UN Single Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol. Uzbekistan is also a party to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and has signed but not ratified the protocol on Migrant Smuggling. In July 2008 Uzbekistan adopted the UN Convention Against Corruption, a development which should help long-term efforts to increase transparency. Uzbekistan has signed the Central Asian Counternarcotics Memorandum of Understanding with the UNODC. In 2006, Uzbekistan formally agreed to the establishment of a Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC) to coordinate information sharing and joint counternarcotics efforts in Central Asia, but is the only member country that has not yet ratified the CARICC agreement. Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan signed an agreement in September 1999 on cooperation in combating transnational crime, including narcotics trafficking. The five Central Asian countries,

as well as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, are members of the Economic Coordination Mechanism supported by the UNODC. The GOU also signed agreements on increased counternarcotics cooperation in 2006 in the context of its membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. However, to date, these agreements appear to have resulted in few tangible results.

CULTIVATION AND PRODUCTION

¶12. (U) Uzbekistan continues to work toward the goals of the 1988 UN Drug Convention on combating illicit cultivation and production within its borders. The annual "Operation Black Poppy" is one of the GOU's counternarcotics success stories, having all but eliminated illicit opium poppy cultivation in Uzbekistan. Authorities log between 600-800 hours of flying time in the course

of the annual operation. However, the operation is hampered by such basic problems as an aging helicopter fleet and lack of fuel for the helicopters. Officials have reported in the past that two of their three helicopters were grounded due to these problems.

DRUG FLOW AND TRANSIT

¶13. (U) Several major transnational trade routes facilitate the transportation of opiates and cannabis from Afghanistan through Uzbekistan to Russia and Europe. The border crossing point at Termez remains a point of concern due to insufficient border control measures. However, a UNODC-implemented border security project at the road and rail crossing has resulted in improved control over the border crossing with Afghanistan, and an INL-funded UNODC project will focus on improving the control regime at the river port. Containers crossing the border from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan are generally not searched, and Uzbeks have requested scanning equipment to help ensure that contraband, including precursor chemicals, does not reach Afghanistan. The National Center and UNODC report that trafficking also continues along traditional smuggling routes and by conventional methods, mainly from Afghanistan into Surkhandarya Province and from Afghanistan via Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic into Uzbekistan. The primary regions in Uzbekistan for the transit of drugs are Tashkent, Termez, the Fergana Valley, Samarkand and Syrdarya.

DOMESTIC PROGRAMS

¶14. (U) According to the National Drug Control Center, at the beginning of 2009, there were 21,089 registered drug addicts in Uzbekistan, of which approximately 69 percent were heroin users. This represents a slight decrease from the number of registered drug addicts at the beginning of 2008. In contrast with the official statistics, the Ministry of Internal Affairs estimates there are 35,000 drug addicts in Uzbekistan. However, observers in the international community believe the official number of registered addicts is believed to reflect only 10-15 percent of the actual drug addicts in Uzbekistan; the actual number is probably over 200,000. Hospitals with drug dependency recovery programs are inadequate to meet the increasing need for detoxification and treatment, although the government is making an effort to open new treatment facilities. The Ministry of Health and National Drug Control Center have recognized the need to focus increased attention on the drug problem, but do not have sufficient funds to do so adequately. Drug awareness programs are administered in cooperation with NGOs, schools, women and youth groups, religious organizations, national radio, and the mahalla (neighborhood) support system. In 2007 UNODC completed an INL-funded drug demand reduction project that demonstrated increased drug abuse awareness among school children, and additional INL funds have already been allocated for the second phase of this drug demand reduction project. A USAID drug demand reduction project which focused on key points along drug trafficking routes to prevent at-risk young people from becoming injecting drug users ended in 2008; some of the activities are continuing under the auspices of local NGOs or health facilities.

U.S. POLICY INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

BILATERAL COOPERATION

¶15. (U) Building a strong counternarcotics strategy requires regional and international partners, funding, viable training, and a long-term commitment. A legal framework for bilateral cooperation between Uzbekistan and the United States already exists under the 2001 U.S.-Uzbekistan Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Agreement and its amendments. These agreements provide for U.S. assistance to Uzbekistan to enhance the capability of Uzbek law enforcement agencies in their efforts to fight narcotics trafficking and organized crime. This assistance is most often provided in the form of technical assistance, training, and limited equipment donations. The new Counternarcotics Affairs Office (CAO) is in the process of assessing the current counternarcotics strategy, with the goal of developing a sound and comprehensive program that will foster bilateral relations and augment (but not duplicate) existing programs. In March of 2007, DEA was forced to temporarily suspend its operations in Uzbekistan when visas for DEA personnel were not renewed. However, in June 2009 the GOU accredited the CAO, which is staffed by DEA. A full-time Counternarcotics Liaison arrived in Uzbekistan in October 2009. The CAO will focus its efforts on strengthening Uzbek institutions and building the operational and investigative capacity of Uzbek law enforcement agencies. In particular, the CAO hopes to assist the GOU in establishing a centralized law enforcement database that would assist those agencies in their investigations and allow them to operate more effectively. The CAO will also encourage Uzbekistan to work more closely with its neighbors, including Afghanistan, to develop investigative intelligence targeting international drug, precursor, and money-laundering organizations.

¶16. (U) The State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), with support from the Department of Justice Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP), continues to support the GOU in its efforts to improve its forensics laboratories. This successful project, which aims to bring Uzbekistan's forensic laboratories up to international standards, has included equipment donation, visits to U.S. laboratories, and a conference for scientists, prosecutors and judges. INL has also provided much-needed basic equipment to border guards in the crucial Surkhandarya Province. The State Department's Bureau of Export and Related Border Security (EXBS) increased its activities in Uzbekistan in 2009 as cooperation with the GOU improved. In April 2009, Uzbek officials from Customs and the Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations, Investment and Trade attended a course on International Export Control Policy at the University of Georgia Export Control Academy. The Customs and Border Protection agency of the Department of Homeland Security also conducted a successful joint International Rail Interdiction Training/International Border Interdiction Training with Uzbek Customs officials and Border Guards at the Termez border crossing in April. The Department of Energy International Nonproliferation Export Control Program (INECP) successfully conducted Commodity Identification Training (CIT) at the Uzbek Customs Academy in May. Uzbek officials participated in the Defense Threat Reduction Agency-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (DTRA-NATO) Advanced Training Course on Nonproliferation in October. The USG is also providing funding to repair and upgrade the Termez river port.

THE ROAD AHEAD

¶17. (U) The U.S. remains committed to working with Uzbekistan to create strong partnerships in areas of mutual interest, including reduction of drug supply, reduction of demand for drugs, treatment of drug addiction, educational programs, anti-corruption programs, and border security. The USG continues to support the GOU in its efforts to establish a balanced and comprehensive counternarcotics strategy, and to enhance investigative and operational capacity. The new Counternarcotics Affairs Office will assist appropriate Uzbek agencies to improve narcotics detection and drug interdiction capabilities, and will leverage its presence in Uzbekistan for direct and regular access to Uzbek law enforcement officials in order to maximize joint efforts. In particular, the CAO will focus

on building Uzbek capacity to investigate and prosecute crimes, thus aiming at the root of the illegal narcotics problem in Uzbekistan. The U.S. will continue to encourage Uzbekistan to

engage with the international community, especially its neighbors.

DATA TABLES

Drug seizure statistics for the first six months of 2008 and the same period in 2009:

	2009	2008
Heroin (kg)	771.4	515.4
Opium (kg)	432.5	370.9
Cannabis (kg)	324.8	268.0
Hashish (kg)	55.8	23.7
Opium Poppy Straw (kg)	120.0	642.0
NORLAND		